



MASTER OF ARTS IN TRANSNATIONAL GOVERNANCE

FLORENCE SCHOOL OF TRANSNATIONAL GOVERNANCE, EUROPEAN
UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE

ACCREDITATION • ASSESSMENT REPORT

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1 Executive summary

Following the comprehensive investigation into the quality of the Master of Arts in Transnational Governance (MTnG), the panel advises the NVAO to grant a positive accreditation decision.

The educational vision of the MTnG programme is grounded in the global reality in which the role of states is increasingly complemented by non-governmental institutions operating across and within national borders. The programme aims to equip students with interdisciplinary knowledge and skills to address these complex, multi-jurisdictional, transboundary, and intergenerational challenges.

The panel met reflexive people, who embody the School of Transnational Governance's (STG) vision and mission and are committed to the high-quality education the STG advocates. The panel is confident that the MTnG programme appeals to students pursuing careers in European institutions or as consultants in the private sector, as it equips them with a broad range of skills and multidisciplinary knowledge that is in high demand. The panel valued the programme's innovative multidisciplinary (although not truly interdisciplinary) approach and its connection between academic reflection and practical application. The programme has established a strong network with diverse European and non-European organisations, ensuring that internships are enriching experiences for students, and providing interesting career prospects for graduates. Furthermore, the panel was impressed by the diversity in teaching and assessment methods, which align with the overall learning outcomes of the programme and cater to the diverse backgrounds of the students. The high faculty-to-student ratio and the availability and support of staff and teaching assistants are distinctive features of this programme. It is a positive development that the share of staff fully dedicated to this programme continues to increase.

The panel encourages STG to address the recommendations arising from the dialogues following a constructive and favourable exchange of perspectives:

- The panel identified a tension concerning the perspective the programme aims to adopt: it aspires to be European, transnational, and global, yet appears to approach the world from a predominantly European viewpoint. The programme could benefit from developing a clearer vision of what it intends to achieve in the classrooms and during internships. The panel recommends that STG clearly articulate its mission to prospective students and ensure alignment with the messaging on its website.
- The unique nature of this programme has pedagogical implications, such as robust supervision, co-teaching and the importance of a strong network of partner institutions where students can do their internships. To support growth of the MTnG student body, STG's network will need to expand, and additional staff will be needed to give students proper guidance and support. In other words, growth will be costly and demanding, requiring institutional investment and commitment, which should be secured.
- Given the strong focus on skills development in the programme, the panel recommends an explicit definition of the skills to be developed and the manner in which they are addressed in the curriculum and assessment.
- Although strong support from the Learning and Teaching Team is available, participation is voluntary, and it remains unclear who can enforce recommendations. The panel

recommends that the programme safeguard its didactic quality by implementing mechanisms to ensure that pedagogical feedback effectively influences teaching practices. This issue should be raised in the Academic Council to ensure institutional support.

- The panel recommends EUI to finalise and fully implement its Quality Assurance Policy and integrate it in the daily operations of the STG. A formally implemented QA policy will support STG in analysing the data gathered and making informed decisions based on it. This issue should also be raised in the Academic Council to ensure institutional support.

The Hague, October 25th, 2024

On behalf of the expert panel convened to assess the Master in Transnational Governance,

Annette Freyberg-Inan

Inge Verbeeck

2 Examination of the panel

2.1 Procedure

Founded in 1972 by the six original members of the then European Communities, the European University Institute (EUI) is a transnational European institution dedicated to the social sciences and humanities. The EUI offers doctoral, postdoctoral, and executive education programmes, annually admitting approximately 150 new PhD researchers across its departments of Economics, History and Civilisation, Law, and Political and Social Sciences. In 2017, the School of Transnational Governance was established as an autonomous academic unit within the EUI. Its mission is to prepare current and future leaders in policymaking beyond the state, offering a policy leader fellowship programme and executive education. In September 2020, the first cohort of students enrolled in the two-year Master's in Transnational Governance.

The NVAO convened an international panel of experts consisting of:

- Prof. Dr. Annette Freyberg-Inan (*chair*)
- Prof. Dr. Leonard Seabrooke (*panel member*)
- Prof. Dr. Pedro Teixeira (*panel member*)
- Mr. Gaga Gvenetadze (*student panel member*)

The composition of the panel reflects the expertise deemed necessary by NVAO for this accreditation exercise. Short CVs of the panel members are provided in Annex 3. On behalf of NVAO, Dr. Mark Frederiks was responsible for the coordination of the assessment process. The external secretary, Ms. Inge Verbeeck, drafted this report in close cooperation with all panel members and in agreement with the chair. All panel members and the secretary signed a statement of independence and confidentiality.

The panel members studied the application documentation and submitted their first impressions on the materials prior to the preparatory panel meeting, which was held online on September 10th, 2024. After having read the institution's report, the panel intended to place the following themes, about which it sought to gain a clearer understanding, on the agenda of the discussions with the European University Institute:

- Intentions of the programme: educational vision, admission, financial and academic sustainability
- Curriculum: contents and structure of the programme, skillset to be acquired by the students, internship
- Faculty: full-time and part-time staff and teaching assistants
- Teaching and Learning Environment: teaching methods, the Learning and Teaching Team, student mobility and support and the learning environment
- Student Assessment: assessment information, the master project
- Quality assurance: internal quality control cycle, EUI's quality assurance policy

The site visit by the full panel took place on September 25th and September 26th, 2024, at the European University Institute's campuses (Badia Fiesolana and Buontalenti) in Florence. The panel talked to the institutional management, as well as to the staff responsible for the programme, students, the teaching and support staff, representatives of the professional field and of the External Advisory Board. The schedule of the visit is presented in Annex 4. Annex 5 lists the materials made available by the STG both before and during the site visits.

Immediately after the discussions, the panel formulated its considerations and preliminary conclusions. These are built on the review of the documents and based on the findings of the site visit. The external secretary then drafted the assessment report and circulated it to all panel members for review and feedback. The comments of the panel were incorporated in a second version, which was validated by the chair and submitted to the STG for comments on factual errors. Following this review, a final draft was prepared and submitted on behalf of the panel to NVAO.

2.2 Findings

2.2.1 Intentions of the programme

2.2.1.1 *The Educational Vision for the Master in Transnational Governance*

According to the self-assessment report, the educational vision of the Master's in Transnational Governance is grounded in the global reality in which the role of states is increasingly complemented by non-governmental institutions operating across and within national borders. The programme aims to equip students with interdisciplinary knowledge and skills to address these complex, multi-jurisdictional, transboundary, and intergenerational challenges.

While the panel appreciated the programme's innovative multidisciplinary approach and its connection between academic reflection and practice, it was not entirely clear from the documentation what the unique contribution and purpose of the programme were, how interdisciplinarity was achieved, how the STG understood the concept of 'transnational governance', and whether the programme's perspective was more European or more global. These matters were raised during the site visit discussions.

The panel learned that the establishment of the programme was an integral part of the EUI's **strategy** to broaden its perspective to the wider world. Following the establishment of research-based foundations, such as the interdisciplinary Robert Schuman Centre, where academic research and policy practice intersect across various public and private sector stakeholders, creating a public policy school and initiating a Master's programme was a logical next step. The programme's foundational elements, according to institutional management, align with the EUI's three guiding principles: (1) European identity, (2) transnationalism as a distinctive approach, and (3) the development of good governance practices and tools. The STG and its students brought enrichment to the EUI in both content, through the diverse student body, and in institutional processes such as quality assurance (see below). In turn, the STG benefitted from the EUI's institutional experience in matters such as admissions, evaluation, and research.

The panel raised a key conceptual issue related to the programme's title, namely whether a clear and stable understanding of '**transnational governance**' existed among the different stakeholders. Programme staff emphasised that STG adopts a non-normative stance, avoiding prescriptive definitions of transnational governance and presenting the broad and multifaceted nature of governance to their students, allowing them to explore various topics, actors, and methods from different perspectives. This stance is reflected in the students' and graduates' perceptions: one student described transnational governance as the practice of examining governance from diverse stakeholders' perspectives, using a 360-degree approach that combines theoretical and practical experience. Other students added that the focus on policy making (skills) and a basic knowledge of those disciplines (economics, law, ...) was needed 'to

understand the bigger picture'. The students' summaries align with the employers' experiences and expectations: graduates of this MA programme are generalists, capable of identifying synergies across areas and adapting to new challenges.

The programme was originally designed to train future policy makers on a transnational level. However, in response to alumni feedback, indicating consultancy firms' demand for graduates with a basic understanding of EU policies, the programme broadened its scope to prepare young professionals for careers beyond the EU region and to address interactions between the **public and private sectors**. The programme's adaptability and focus on students' skill development are regarded as core features. This flexibility is achieved through foundational courses taught by full-time staff in the first year and a varied second-year curriculum tailored to student interests. Graduates the panel spoke to acknowledged the programme's effectiveness in preparing them for private-sector alongside public-sector roles, but the preparation for work in the private sector should remain a point of attention.

The programme's dual focus as both **EU-oriented and global**, one of the driving ideas behind the project, presents a balancing act. There is a clear European mission: STG was established by the European Commission with the political goal of being a public policy school of European nature, and most students applying for this programme envisage a career in European organisations. Yet, a broader global ambition is also evident: STG seeks to address global issues from both EU and non-EU perspectives, using the EU as a successful example of transnational governance. This is difficult in practice. For example, some students expressed concerns about the programme's Eurocentric approach, desiring a broader perspective. Some non-EU students noted a lack of opportunity to share their perspectives during courses. The panel got the sense that the balancing act between EU-identity and global orientation would benefit from further discussion across the programme. The External Advisory Board (EAB) could provide useful input here.

Following its review of the programme documentation, the panel raised questions about the challenges associated with an **interdisciplinary programme**, such as teaching, coordination and staff profiles. The institutional management responded that the interrelatedness of teaching and research is a distinctive feature of the social sciences, and that the STG, through its full-time staff who are an integral part of the research activity of the EUI, has been embedded in the EUI's existing research practices since its inception. The EUI's conviction that complex societal issues (such as the impact of technology on daily life, equality and so forth) require a multidisciplinary approach, is part of EUI's DNA and underpins the programme.

The panel learned that 'multidisciplinarity' rather than 'interdisciplinarity' is the term preferred in the programme, as it better matches the current approach. The intention is to evolve towards greater interdisciplinarity in the future. This intended shift will require even greater collaboration among staff members and will demand continuous investment as well as attention to the profile of recruited faculty. The panel suggests STG to devise a clear plan to achieve this objective.

2.2.1.2 Admission to the Programme

The self-assessment report clearly outlines the admission procedure, admission criteria and funding allocation. However, the panel sought clarification on the involvement of student representatives in the admissions process. It was explained that while students are entitled to

attend selection committee meetings as observers, they do not have voting rights. This policy aims to ensure transparency in line with established EUI procedures.

In the meetings, the main reasons mentioned for choosing to study at EUI were the institution's prestige, its renowned international faculty of academics and practitioners, the close interaction between staff and students, internship opportunities, the EUI network's ability to create job prospects post-graduation, and the attractive living environment in Florence. For non-EU students, the challenges of coming to study in Florence (visa, housing) are generally greater, so they require extra support.

2.2.1.3 *Sustainability of the Programme*

The panel observed that this programme occupies a unique position within the EUI: it is its sole Master's programme equivalent to a full second cycle programme, and its features (its multidisciplinaryity, its focus on teaching, with an international teaching faculty and interactive teaching methodologies) are unique and require institutional support and investment. The discussion with the EAB clarified that this period is a period of transition, both for the EUI and for the programme. The latter has now run for several years, and its strengths and areas for improvement are becoming clear. At the same time, the EUI finds itself in a transition period in which, under new leadership, a new strategy for the EUI and the strategic vision of STG as a part of it, are being developed. It seems advisable to involve the EAB in this process as well.

The EUI's and STG's priority is to invest in the programme's attractiveness to prospective students and employers rather than to expand its scale. Focus groups and discussions with students confirm that they are drawn to the programme for its unique multidisciplinary approach, the high quality of staff, their personalised approach to students, and the internship opportunities leading to job placements. In order to ensure its academic sustainability, STG would prefer to pursue closer collaboration with key partners and maybe explore options for joint degrees, rather than becoming a mainstream Master's programme. The connection to practice is crucial.

In terms of financial sustainability, the STG is partly funded by student fees, Erasmus+, and the European Commission. While STG covers 50% of its costs, it remains dependent on EC funding. Although the latter is a concern, according to the President, EUI is actively engaged in discussions with the Commission to ensure the programme's financial sustainability, which are progressing well.

The panel's discussions with management and faculty largely clarified STG's vision for and the unique contribution of the programme. While this was not fully conveyed in the self-assessment report, the conversations revealed that the vision was mostly clear, well thought-out, and widely shared by the team. However, the panel identified a tension concerning the perspective the programme aims to adopt: it aspires to be European, transnational, and global, yet seems to approach the world from a predominantly European viewpoint. The programme could benefit from developing a clearer vision of what it intends to achieve in the classrooms, and the panel recommends that STG clearly articulate its mission to prospective students and ensure alignment with the messaging on their website.

Secondly, the unique nature of this programme has pedagogical implications, such as robust supervision, co-teaching and the importance of a strong network of partner institutions where

students can do their internships. To support growth of the MTnG student body, STG's network will need to expand, and additional staff will be needed to give students proper guidance and support. In other words, growth will be costly and demanding, requiring institutional investment and commitment, which should be secured.

2.2.2 Curriculum

2.2.2.1 Contents and Structure of the Programme

This two-year Master's programme (120 ECTS) comprises four main components: foundation and elective courses, an internship, and a Master's Project. Foundation courses – compulsory and delivered in the first year by full-time faculty – ensure that all students, regardless of prior education, acquire the necessary fundamental skills and knowledge by the end of the first year. During the first year, students take six core courses (of 5 ECTS each) and six complementary courses (of 3 ECTS each) and the internship (12 ECTS). In the second year, students take four core courses (5 ECTS credits each), four complementary courses (3 ECTS credits each), and complete the Master Project Training (8 ECTS credits) and the Master Project (20 ECTS credits).

In the second year, students may tailor their studies by selecting from a range of elective courses, which vary based on student interest. In 2024-2025, the four available tracks are: 1) Administration and Policy, 2) Democracy and Citizenship, 3) Economics of Geopolitics, and 4) Global Challenges. Courses are assigned to tracks in consultation with the Academic and Programme Directors and individual faculty members. Students must complete two core courses within a track and a Master's Project in a related field to qualify for a specialisation, although opting out of specialisation is permitted. The staff acknowledges the challenge of aligning cohort-specific interests with the availability of part-time faculty and ensuring the depth of specialisations offered.

During the site visit, staff explained that developing a new degree, particularly in a hybrid setting such as the EUI (both an international institute and a university previously offering only PhD and postdoc programmes), has been challenging. The documentation indicates that the programme design has been iterative, with student feedback continuously influencing modifications. This has especially impacted the first year of study. For example, students now receive crash courses in mathematics and EU institutions during the induction weeks, the number of ECTS-credits has been adapted and quantitative methods received greater emphasis. These changes help address the differences in prior knowledge among the student body and create a better foundation, enabling deeper learning in the second year. Additionally, student feedback prompted a less condensed course structure: 3 ECTS courses now span at least three weeks, and 5 ECTS courses last at least five weeks. This is a positive development.

According to the documentation, the programme's staff develop courses and course learning outcomes in alignment with the programme-level learning outcomes, although maintaining consistency has been a noted challenge. Staff members mentioned that during programme development, intensive sessions were held to discuss syllabi, ensuring coherence of the programme. Over time, curricular logic has improved, reducing the frequency of such sessions.

2.2.2.2 21st Century Skills

Throughout the documentation the importance of developing 'skills' is highlighted. These are defined as 'employability' skills such as teamwork, presentation, communication and decision-making and as lifelong learning skills, although these are often not explicitly defined. During

the conversations, the staff referred to self-organisation, negotiation, self-direction, planning, policy writing and digital awareness. Teaching assistants mentioned debating skills, transnational thinking, pitching, problem-solving, and managing AI.

The Programme Director acknowledged that the programme could 1) be more explicit about the specific skills it aims to develop in students and 2) more clearly define the professional skills expected from internships. The panel supports this view: currently there is not an explicit shared understanding across the programme regarding the skill set aimed at and how those skills are realised in the programme. This should be developed and communicated across the programme.

2.2.2.3 *The Curricular Internship*

All students complete a curricular internship (12 ECTS / 300 work hours) between their first and second years. The Careers Officer supports students in securing placements with existing partners, such as the European Parliament, the European External Action Service, the OECD, and UNICEF, to name a few. Students may also apply for internships with an organisation of their choice, in cooperation with the Careers Officer. Students can apply to a maximum of three organisations, with the organisation selecting the student. Competition for positions within popular organisations can create friction during the application process. Upon completion, both the student and organisation submit reports, which are reviewed before credits (pass/fail) are awarded.

The panel learned that while some were disappointed not to secure their first-choice internship, students found the overall process straightforward and appreciated the programme's connections with prestigious organisations. Few students chose placements outside Europe, which underlines the limits in praxis to the global focus of STG. Students and graduates expressed appreciation for the Careers Officer's support throughout the process.

The Careers Officer mentioned that there are currently enough internship placements for the number of students. However, if the student body grows, additional partnerships will be necessary to ensure sufficient attractive positions. Moreover, to maintain personalised student support, which is crucial, increased resources may be required.

Employers remarked that interns demonstrated strong professionalism, solid knowledge of relevant policy areas, a clear understanding of EU-level institutions, and strong communication, organisational, and writing skills. One employer suggested that knowing a student's post-graduation work preferences would be useful, indicating that the internship is a key recruitment channel.

The panel recognised the internship as one of the programme's greatest strengths. The network of internship partners and the opportunity for students to engage with these organisations are the programme's strong asset. The panel wishes to point out that the selection process and partnership network require substantial behind-the-scenes effort and need robust institutional support. Additionally, the panel invites STG to specify the learning outcomes — including the desired skillset — that every internship should contribute to, next to the specific terms of reference which will differ between hosting organisations. If STG aims to emphasise the global perspective of its programme, an internship in a non-EU organisation could provide the ideal opportunity to view the EU from a global standpoint. However, the

panel found that most students want to work for an EU organisation and tend to choose internships aligned with that goal.

The panel appreciated the open and reflexive attitude of the staff regarding the curriculum, both in the documentation and during the discussions. It is confident in the faculty's willingness and competence to ensure a qualitative programme that is both consistent and flexible. Course content is sufficiently coordinated across the programme. However, the panel observed that the skills STG seeks to develop in its MTnG programme remain largely implicit, despite a certain degree of mutual understanding. The panel, therefore, encourages the faculty to explicitly define the skillset that the programme aims to develop.

2.2.3 Faculty

2.2.3.1 Full-Time and Part-Time Staff

STG employs both full-time and part-time staff to deliver courses. The programme's high faculty-to-student ratio is a distinctive feature, highly valued by students. Full-time faculty, generally speaking, bring stronger academic and research expertise, while part-time faculty, often involved in policy work, politics, or international organisations, bring practical experience and valuable employment connections. Initially, STG had to be pragmatic due to its inability to offer long-term contracts during the pilot phase. As a result, part-time faculty delivered much of the teaching, implying that STG had to structure the programme around the staff's availability. However, full-time hiring rounds in 2019, 2021, and 2023 have resulted in 11 full-time staff members. Of the 26 part-time staff, some hold near full-time contracts or have been with STG for several years, providing continuity and close integration with the School. The transition towards full-time faculty reflects both the growth of the School and the recognition of the importance of full-time faculty on-site for student guidance and continuity. It also created the opportunity to recruit faculty with specific profiles aligned with the programme's goals. Having more stable and more available teaching staff also allowed for greater investment in teaching and learning and supporting students. It also enhances the learning experience for STG and EUI of having a taught program that has different requirements and needs from the previous education portfolio of the institution.

Scheduling part-time faculty, who often have tight availability, can present challenges, particularly in aligning their schedules with student needs. This is managed through the programme's core and complementary course structure. Most core courses are delivered by full-time staff on-site, ensuring consistent teaching, while complementary courses are often delivered in more concentrated formats. STG's proposal to hire full-time 'professors of practice' was rejected by the Member States. In summary, full-time faculty are essential for academic and organisational stability, while part-time staff maintain important links with the professional world.

At EUI, faculty are tenured on five-year contracts, extendable for up to eight years (ten or twelve years in exceptional cases). This obviously presents challenges with regard to continuity and quality. While Programme Management asserted that non-permanent faculty are as well integrated as full-time staff, students sometimes experience that communication with part-time faculty can be challenging, as they are not so integrated or fully aware of students' other commitments in the programme. They did, however, also mention that staff is always flexible to adapt deadlines, if necessary.

The panel sought to understand how STG involves a dynamically changing teaching staff, who also are specialists in a single discipline, in an inter- or multidisciplinary programme of a practical nature. STG acknowledged this challenge, although several factors help to ensure success. Firstly, the faculty hired at STG are enthusiastic about this unique approach and are open to exploring new teaching methods and interdisciplinary collaboration. Secondly, the focus on transnational governance stimulates inter- or at least multidisciplinary teaching, and certain disciplines, transnational law for example, are inherently interdisciplinary. Thirdly, full-time and also some part-time staff are connected with other EUI departments, facilitating continuous cross-disciplinary communication.

2.2.3.2 *Teaching Assistants*

Teaching Assistants (TAs) are EUI PhD students who support faculty by managing the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) Brightspace, assisting in seminars, providing student support, and helping with grading. Faculty members have discretion in how much responsibility they allocate to TAs. Most of the TAs are involved in administrative duties, such as providing feedback, grading, and supporting students. Some TAs also co-teach alongside academic staff. All TAs expressed satisfaction with the guidance and cooperation they receive from their professors.

TA positions are advertised through open competition to all EUI students. Prior teaching experience is preferred but not required. New TAs are typically appointed per academic year, allowing fresh PhD students to gain experience. The OAA provides training about the use of Brightspace and its tools to help TAs manage their roles. TAs are also encouraged to attend the trainings on teaching and learning issues provided by the Teaching and Learning Team. Although this training is highly recommended, it is not mandatory. The TAs interviewed by the panel spoke positively about the training.

The panel observed that while there are senior faculty members and teaching assistants, there are no tenure tracks that allow academic staff to map out their careers at STG. As all staff members are employed on a temporary basis, hiring staff proves to be a challenge. It does not seem self-evident to find people willing to engage in the coordination of the programme if they cannot stay in the long term.

Additionally, the panel noted that although STG has plans to introduce mandatory and more formal teaching and training for TAs, this provision is currently only 'strongly recommended'. The panel encourages STG to accelerate this process in order to further ensure the programme's pedagogical quality.

2.2.4 Teaching and Learning Environment

2.2.4.1 *Teaching Methods*

The MTnG cohorts are highly diverse, comprising students from both inside and outside the European Union, with a roughly equal distribution of 50:50 and 48 nationalities represented. Most students hold undergraduate degrees in international relations, politics, economics, law, or related fields, with some already possessing Master's degrees. The panel was particularly interested in how STG accommodates this diversity of academic backgrounds within its multidisciplinary approach.

Firstly, STG frequently uses **case studies**, presenting complex problems that touch on various policy topics and are examined from different perspectives and disciplines. These case studies,

continuously developed by research fellows in collaboration with faculty, stimulate discussion and encourage students to draw on their personal backgrounds. This approach allows students with advanced knowledge to delve deeper into the subject while enabling those with less prior knowledge to achieve the basic learning outcomes. Additionally, case studies are an effective method for fostering a multidisciplinary perspective.

The second measure, introduced after several years, is **co-teaching**, where two colleagues (including TAs) with different expertise teach together. This method is now used in several courses and is appreciated by both staff and students. Next to accommodating student diversity, it helps foster multidisciplinary and may help the programme move towards genuine interdisciplinarity.

Small group sizes are essential for interactive work with case studies. Both students and alumni emphasise that the small class sizes were a key reason for choosing STG, and these remain one of the programme's most valuable features. There is some concern among students about the increasing number of students in certain courses. This is something STG should monitor alongside its reflections about the sustainability of the program and how to balance growth with teaching effectiveness and quality.

2.2.4.2 *The Learning and Teaching Team*

The Learning and Teaching Team (LTT), part of the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA), consists of two full-time employees who focus on pedagogy and dedicate half of their time to the MTnG programme. The panel sought to understand how the LTT collaborates with faculty members. The LTT pedagogue noted that the diversity in international staff practices makes establishing common didactic principles – such as for curriculum design and planning and harmonisation of grades – critical. She described the process of adapting to these methods – by means of guides on learning outcomes and alignment and the development of assessment rubrics – as a learning curve for all involved.

Twice a year, the LTT sends individual faculty members student evaluations, along with personal recommendations, and an overall report to the Academic Director who shares this feedback with the faculty. The recommendations mainly focus on assessment and feedback practices. If needed, one-on-one meetings are arranged to discuss the results, where the pedagogue offers suggestions for improvement. However, these suggestions are not mandatory, and it remains unclear whether the Academic Director has the authority to enforce them. Furthermore, there is no centralised system for sharing teaching resources, a gap the LTT would like to address, as it is convinced that many of its recommendations could benefit the entire faculty. This issue should be raised in Academic Council so that the EUI can form an institutional position on best practices.

2.2.4.3 *Student Mobility and Support*

The MTnG programme offers students the opportunity to study abroad during their third semester through the Student Mobility Programme (SMP). This is facilitated through partnership agreements with leading higher education institutions and public policy schools both within the EU and globally. The mobility programme adheres to the Lisbon Recognition Convention and utilises the Erasmus+ scheme. The Mobility Officer, a member of the OAA, supports students throughout this process and ensures that individual learning agreements are in place so students can earn between 20 and 30 ECTS credits while studying abroad, in Europe or worldwide. The past four academic years, between 9 and 14 students per year chose to go

abroad. STG has between 7 and 11 incoming students yearly. More student mobility outside the EU could be an opportunity to strengthen the programme's global orientation.

2.2.4.4 *The Learning Environment*

STG's **facilities** are split between Palazzo Buontalenti and the EUI-wide campus centred around Badia Fiesolana. A free shuttle service connects the two sites, available to students, faculty, and fellows. Palazzo Buontalenti is undergoing maintenance and renovations as part of a programme established by the Italian State, which owns the site. Although there are no dormitories for students at the Buontalenti site at present, they are being developed.

The Badia Fiesolana campus houses an impressive **library**, with 30% of EUI's collection available on-site. Students can access the library or request books, which are then transferred between the villas twice daily. Digital resources are available to all students both on- and off-campus.

The students expressed their need of having better and more **student services** available. A mental health officer has been provided recently. International students would benefit from more on-campus assistance for administrative matters such as visas and housing.

The panel was impressed by the way the teaching methods cater to the diverse backgrounds of the students and regards the co-teaching approach very positively. It was convinced that the methods in place help achieve the programme's goal of equipping students with skills across different disciplines and fostering awareness of multiple perspectives. However, if all students are together, classes may be too large (60 students) for effective interaction. The panel suggests STG to consider this when growing.

Although strong support from the Learning and Teaching Team is available, participation is voluntary, and it remains unclear who can enforce recommendations. The panel recommends that the programme safeguard the didactic quality by implementing mechanisms to ensure that pedagogical feedback effectively influences teaching practices. Now, the panel sees uneven responses by Faculty to pedagogical advice and the inputs from LTT and even from the Academic Director. Although this is not rare, it might be reinforced by two characteristics of EUI: an academic culture favouring research achievements over pedagogical ones and a not fully formalised approach to Quality Assurance. Stronger attention and commitment to pedagogical issues by Faculty should be central to the concerns of the scientific director of the programme.

The mobility process is well-organised, and the learning environment is well-supported by the available facilities. However, the panel suggests STG to consider strengthening the on-campus services, especially for international students.

2.2.5 *Student Assessment*

2.2.5.1 *Assessment Information*

The documentation indicates that STG employs a variety of assessment methods that are aligned with the learning outcomes of its courses. These methods include in-person written exams, essays, oral exams, video assignments, debates, case studies, simulations, and policy hackathons. To ensure consistency in grading, rubrics have been developed for assessing students' written work, oral presentations, group participation, cooperation, and class

engagement. These rubrics are accessible to both students and faculty. Additionally, course syllabi clearly outline learning objectives and assessment methods, and, according to the students, professors organise meetings to further clarify expectations when necessary.

STG consciously opts for this broad range of assessment methods to accommodate the diverse backgrounds and talents of its student body, allowing each student the opportunity to demonstrate their strengths. For example, the panel learned that one course uses a combination of written exams to ensure that students master the basics, alongside case studies that also offer multiple pathways to success. The MTnG faculty and students use Brightspace, the school's virtual learning environment, as a teaching and learning platform. On Brightspace, faculty can assess assignment submissions, and students can see detailed feedback from professors based on assessment criteria.

2.2.5.2 *The Master Project*

The Master Project (20 ECTS) is a key component of the second-year curriculum. It is complemented by 8 ECTS of methodological and research design training. Students work closely with a supervisor from the STG's faculty, who guides them through the project. Each project is graded independently by both the supervisor and a second marker, with a third marker stepping in if needed.

Students can choose between a traditional thesis or a capstone report. The capstone report involves solving a real-world problem in collaboration with an organisation or institution. Despite this practical appeal, many students opt for a thesis instead, as potential employers often expect to see a thesis. Annually, only a small number (up to four) choose the capstone report.

Although the general assessment criteria for the Master Project are clearly stated, the panel noted that the weighting of the different assessment components is not explicitly documented, unlike in other course assessments. The panel suggested making the grading criteria more explicit, perhaps through rubrics. Faculty members currently use varying grading scales, though the Academic Director reviews all written feedback to ensure consistency, and the Examination Board also checks the Master Projects assessments. However, the expected growth in student numbers may complicate this review process. To address this, the panel suggested that faculty hold assessment calibration sessions, where they can collectively discuss and align their evaluations of several theses.

2.2.6 **Quality assurance**

2.2.6.1 *STG's Internal Quality Control Cycle*

STG conducts regular **student feedback** surveys at the end of each semester, assessing course structure and materials, delivery and teaching methods, student engagement and involvement, instructors and TA engagement, feedback and support. The LTT reviews these surveys, sends them to all faculty members, and general trends are discussed at the faculty meeting at the start of the academic year. Results are discussed if the faculty members wish to do so. Student feedback is communicated back to students through elected representatives (two per cohort). Beyond formal surveys at the end of a semester, students frequently engage informally with faculty and teaching assistants to address concerns. STG acts on recurring themes in the feedback by implementing immediate, short-term, and long-term changes to courses and syllabi where necessary.

Student representatives, elected by their peers, attend school-level committees, including the Academic Council and Executive Committee, and participate in faculty appointments and admissions as observers.

The **Faculty Board**, which comprises all full-time faculty, student, and fellow representatives, plays a role in ensuring the quality and coherence of the programme. It reviews student feedback from the previous year, advises the Academic Director, monitors faculty workload and teaching duties, and discusses programme operations with the Office of Academic Affairs. However, the presence of student representatives on the Faculty Board can create challenges when discussing confidential matters related to students or faculty. To address this, STG has proposed forming a separate Master Programme Committee, pending approval from the Academic and High Councils.

The **External Advisory Board (EAB)**, composed of representatives from the European Commission, Parliament, and academia, in normal circumstances meets annually to provide feedback on STG's activities and the MTnG programme specifically. The past 18 months the EAB has not convened, but the EAB representatives expressed a desire to resume regular meetings, to ensure academic continuity and safeguard the programme's core principles.

2.2.6.2 *EUI's Quality Assurance Policy*

The panel found STG has established a sound feedback system, including means to address issues concerning the programme, the courses and the faculty. This feedback gathering guarantees that the curriculum is sensitive to student demands and enables data-driven adjustments. During the site visit, STG staff displayed a strong culture of self-reflection and openness, committed to maintaining high standards of quality assurance.

However, the panel noted that a formal quality assurance system at STG has not yet been implemented, similar to the broader EUI policy, which is still in development. The appointment of a Quality Assurance Officer in 2022 marked progress in formalising these processes, with a comprehensive EUI Quality Assurance Policy expected by the end of 2024. A core cyclical mechanism of internal quality assurance, applying also to STG, is the five-year internal monitoring cycle involving self-assessment and external evaluation by the Research Council. STG will undergo its first review in 2025.

Thus, in preparation for the site visit, the panel was only able to look into the draft version of the EUI Quality Assurance Policy. The panel expressed concerns that this formalised procedure might be seen as top-down, risking limited appropriation from STG faculty. However, the representatives of EUI and STG both assured the panel that the policy proposal reflects collective input and, moreover, that STG's practices have informed the wider EUI framework. The policy outlines agreed-upon best practices, serving as a foundation for quality assurance of EUI and contributing to EUI's new strategic plan.

The panel acknowledged that systems for monitoring and evaluation are in place and that student feedback is thoroughly addressed. The STG faculty recognises the importance of consolidating its quality assurance framework, ensuring that informal practices and knowledge are formalised, particularly given the presence of part-time and non-permanent staff. The panel very strongly recommends EUI to finalise and fully implement its Quality Assurance Policy

and to integrate it in the daily operation of the STG. A formally implemented QA policy will support STG in analysing the gathered data and make informed decisions based on it. The panel recommends that this issue be taken to Academic Council to ensure institutional support.

3 Judgement

Following a comprehensive investigation into the quality of the *Master of Arts in Transnational Governance*, the panel concludes that the programme meets the assessment grounds. Consequently, the panel recommends that the NVAO grant a positive accreditation decision.

Several strengths convinced the panel of the quality of the programme. Not in first instance the self-assessment file, but rather the conversations during the site visit clarified the STG's vision for and the unique contribution of the programme. The MTnG programme successfully equips students with multidisciplinary knowledge and relevant skills to address the complex challenges of our global world, in which the role of states is increasingly complemented by non-governmental institutions operating across and within national borders. The meetings during the site visit also demonstrated that this vision is widely shared by the team. The panel appreciated the open and reflexive attitude of the staff both in the documentation and during the discussions. It is confident in their competence to ensure a high-quality programme that is both consistent and flexible. The panel is confident that the MTnG programme can serve students pursuing careers, e.g., in European institutions or as consultants in the private sector, as it equips them with a range of skills and multidisciplinary knowledge that is in high demand and supports them well.

The panel valued the programme's innovative multidisciplinary approach and its connection between academic reflection and practical application. The programme has established a strong network with diverse European and non-European organisations, ensuring that internships are enriching experiences for students, and that after graduation provide interesting career prospects. Furthermore, the panel appreciated the diversity in teaching and assessment methods, which align with the overall learning outcomes of the programme and cater to the diverse backgrounds of the students. Course syllabi clearly outline learning outcomes and assessment methods. The high faculty-to-student ratio and the availability and support of staff and teaching assistants are distinctive features, highly valued by students. The panel acknowledged that systems for monitoring and evaluation are in place and that student feedback is thoroughly addressed.

The panel encourages the programme to address the recommendations arising from the dialogues following a constructive and favourable exchange of perspectives:

- The panel identified a tension concerning the perspective the programme aims to adopt: it aspires to be European, transnational, and global, yet appears to approach the world from a predominantly European viewpoint. The programme could benefit from developing a clearer vision of what it intends to achieve in the classrooms and during internships. The panel recommends that STG clearly articulate its mission to prospective students and ensure alignment with the messaging on its website.
- The unique nature of this programme has pedagogical implications, such as robust supervision, co-teaching and the importance of a strong network of partner institutions where students can do their internships. To support growth of the MTnG student body, STG's network will need to expand, and additional staff will be needed to give students proper guidance and support. In other words, growth will be costly and demanding, requiring institutional investment and commitment, which should be secured.

- Given the strong focus on skills development in the programme, the panel recommends an explicit definition of the skills to be developed and the manner in which they are addressed in the curriculum and assessment.
- Although strong support from the Learning and Teaching Team is available, participation is voluntary, and it remains unclear who can enforce recommendations. The panel recommends that the programme safeguard its didactic quality by implementing mechanisms to ensure that pedagogical feedback effectively influences teaching practices. This issue should be raised in the Academic Council to ensure institutional support.
- The panel recommends EUI to finalise and fully implement its Quality Assurance Policy and integrate it in the daily operations of the STG. A formally implemented QA policy will support STG in analysing the data gathered and making informed decisions based on it. This issue should also be raised in the Academic Council to ensure institutional support.

4 Review process

The assessment was carried out in line with the 'Assessment framework programme accreditation – June 2020'.

The panel prepared itself for the assessment based on the self-assessment report submitted by the institution when applying for accreditation. Prior to the preparatory meeting of the panel, each panel member formulated initial impressions and questions were listed. During a preparatory online meeting on September 10th, the panel discussed all information received in the application file and prepared the dialogue with the programme. Impressions and questions were updated before the dialogue with the institution.

The dialogue took place on Wednesday September 25th, 2024 and Thursday September 26th, 2024.

During the dialogue the panel investigated the context of the programme and the institution and collected all required information to make a judgement on the quality of the programme.

During a closed meeting of the panel on Thursday September 26th the panel discussed all information obtained and translated it into a holistic judgement. The panel took this conclusion in full independence.

All information obtained led to a draft assessment report that has been sent to all panel members. The feedback from the panel members has been processed. The assessment report adopted by the chair was submitted to NVAO on October 25th, 2024.

Annex 1: Administrative data regarding the institution and the programme

Institution	Florence School of Transnational Governance, European University Institute
Address, institution website	Palazzo Buontalenti, via Cavour, Firenze https://www.eui.eu/en/academic-units/school-of-transnational-governance
Programme	Master in Transnational Governance
Level and orientation	Master, Equivalent to EQF level 7
(Additional) title	/
(Parts of) field of study(s)	Global Public Policy
Specialisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration and Policy; • Democracy and Citizenship; • Geopolitics of Economics; • Global Challenges
Programme routes	Full-Time in Residence
Location where the programme is offered	Palazzo Buontalenti, via Cavour, Firenze, Italy
Teaching language	English
Study load (in credits)	120 ECTS
Programme-specific learning outcomes	See next page

Annex 2: Programme-specific learning outcomes

On completion of the Master in Transnational Governance, students will be able to:

1. utilise systematic knowledge and critical awareness to engage in systematic evaluation and analysis of the role and nature of transnational governance forms in different contexts;
2. develop and respond to research questions, showing originality in the application of that systematic knowledge to create and interpret existing knowledge in the field;
3. critically evaluate current research and advanced scholarship in relation to transnational governance and the consequences such forms of governance have for both the role of the state and for the way in which power is distributed amongst different actors;
4. apply a range of complex methodologies and techniques, showing a comprehensive understanding of such techniques, in order to carry out independent research in relation to issues emerging through transnational governance;
5. predict, solve and evaluate complex issues emerging from transnational governance, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences; and
6. complete tasks efficiently, showing the exercise of personal responsibility and self-direction and originality in planning and implementation both independently and as part of a team.

Annex 3: Composition of the panel

The assessment was made by a panel of experts convened and appointed by the NVAO. The panel is composed as follows:

Annette Freyberg-Inan (*chair*) is Professor of International Relations and former Dean of the Graduate School of Social Sciences, University of Amsterdam. Previously she was chair in International Relations at the University of Darmstadt. She has vast experience with international quality assurance procedures.

Leonard Seabrooke (*panel member*) is Professor of International Political Economy and Economic Sociology in the Department of Organization at the Copenhagen Business School, and Research Professor at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. He is also an Honorary Professor at the University of Adelaide.

Pedro Teixeira (*panel member*) is Full Professor of Economics at the University of Porto and former Director of CIPES – Centre of Research in Higher Education Policies (2009-2022) and Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs at U. Porto (2014-2018). Between March 2022 and April 2024, he was the Secretary of State for Higher Education in the Portuguese Government. He has been on evaluation panels for EUA and ENQA and was national expert for DG Education.

Gaga Gvenetadze (*student panel member*) has two Master's degrees in Global Governance, Intercultural Relations, and Peace Process Management from Siena, and Education Administration from Ilia State University. Currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Applied Social Psychology at Tbilisi State University.

The panel was assisted by:

- **Mark Frederiks**, senior policy advisor NVAO, process coordinator;
- **Inge Verbeeck**, external secretary, certified by NVAO.

All panel members and the process coordinator/secretary have signed NVAO's code of ethics.

Annex 4: Schedule of the site visit

Wednesday September 25th, 2024

Time	Topic
8.30-9.00	Arrival of the panel at Badia Fiesolana
9.00-9.45	Meeting with institutional management
9.45-10.30	Visit of the library
10.30-11.00	Transfer to Buontalenti
11.00-11.45	Meeting with management/staff responsible for the programme
11.45-12.00	Break
12.00-12.45	Meeting with OAA Team
12.45-13.45	Lunch break
13.45-14.15	Tour of the STG
14.15-15.00	Meeting with MTnG students (Maathai cohort, second year)
15.00-15.15	Break
15.15-16.00	Meeting with Faculty
16.00-16.15	Break
16.15-17.00	Meeting with Teaching Assistants and Research Assistants
17.00-17.15	Break
17.15-18.00	Meeting on quality assurance
18.00-19.00	Panel meeting

Thursday September 26th, 2024

8.30- 9.00-	Arrival of panel
9.00-9.45	Meeting with employers and graduates of the programme
9.45-10.00	Break
10.00-10.45	Meeting with representatives from the External Advisory Board
10.45-11.00	Break
11.00-11.30	Additional clarification meeting (at panel's or programme's request)
11.30-13.00	Panel meeting and lunch break
13.00-13.30	Final feedback session with programme/institutional representatives
13.30	Departure of the panel

Annex 5: Overview of the material studied

Self-Assessment Report

Mandatory annexes to the Self-Assessment Report

- Annex I: Administrative Data
- Annex II: Rules and Regulations of the Master in Transnational Governance
- Annex III: Learning Outcomes, Alignment, and Indicative Syllabi
- Annex IV: Admissions
- Annex V: Assessment Information and Grading
- Annex VI: Transcript of Records
- Annex VII: Curricular Internships and Careers Services
- Annex VIII: Mobility
- Annex IX: Student Surveys and Responses
- Annex X: Alumni Information
- Annex XI: Faculty and Staff Information
- Annex XII: EUI Strategy
- Annex XIII: External Advisory Board

Documents made available during or leading up to the dialogue

Received September 6th:

- Student survey reports for all MTnG generations

Received September 13th:

- Examples of Master's theses and capstone reports
- Code of Practice on Freedom of Expression
- Data on mobility

Received September 19th:

- Draft EUI Policy for Quality Assurance
- Data on students' completion in N, N+1, and N+2 years and drop-out rates
- List of current teaching assistants

Annex 6: List of abbreviations

EAB	External Advisory Board
ECTS	European Credit according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EUI	European University Institute
MTnG	Master in Transnational Governance
NVAO	Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie)
OAA	Operations and Academic Affairs
SMP	Student Mobility Programme
STG	School of Transnational Government
TA	Teaching Assistant
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment

Colofon

MASTER OF ARTS IN TRANSNATIONAL GOVERNANCE

SCHOOL OF TRANSNATIONAL GOVERNANCE – EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE (VL01INT-24)

Accreditation • Assessment report

October 25th, 2024

Composition: NVAO • Vlaanderen



Nederlands-Vlaamse Accreditatieorganisatie
Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders

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